

Abstract

Web/portal-based systems and methods for selling, configuring, installing, reconfiguring and servicing such integrated voice/data communications systems are disclosed. An Internet/web or personal digital assistant (“PDA”) or personal computer (“PC”) based portal is provided to

5 enable a relatively high level of data to be more easily collected. The portal preferably is graphical and guides either the customer or one or more sales persons (or site installer/technician, etc.) in the collection of user requirements data indicative of the particular customer's hardware, telephony and network service requirements. The user requirements data is a less technical, more intuitive level of user requirements data, as compared with configuration data. An initial test of

10 the data preferably is performed, such as for purposes of data consistency, ensuring that all required data has been entered and the like. Thereafter, the user requirements data is translated into configuration data, preferably by way of automatic (or semi-automatic) software tools for installation or input into the integrated voice/data communications system in order to configure the system in a manner appropriate to satisfy the user requirements data. Such portal-based user requirements data entry is coupled to, and part of, a method for selling, ordering, manufacturing, testing and installing such integrated voice/data communications systems. Configuration data resulting from a user requirements level data entry and translation process is coupled at a desirable point with a hardware manufacturing process, such that an integrated system configured for the particular customer may be produced. A centralized intelligence may be involved in the

15 configuration and testing of such integrated systems, thereby helping to facilitate configuration and testing, and thereby helping to ensure that the installed system will work correctly and in accordance with the requirements of the particular customer. Such a centralized intelligence also may be used to facilitate equipment upgrades and the provision of WAN or other network or other services to the particular customer.